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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 TIM. III., 14-17.

The end is always more important than the means. The harvest is of more value than the implements by which the harvest is cultured or reaped. The house is of more value than the tools by which the house is builded. The family for whom the house is built is of more value than the house itself.

The value of the Bible is in that in which it does. In and of itself, it is but a book; but if it has in it the means of making men thoroughly furnished unto every good work, then it is of transcendent importance. And it is, in any age, of value in proportion to its practical results. If it does nothing, it is worth nothing—worth nothing in the same sense that gold is worth nothing that lies in the mountain undug and unused. A medicine not discovered is useless. And the Word of God may be an utterly useless word, while it may be capable of being transcendently valuable.

There are two renderings for the critical part of the passage which I have read.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Thus our authorized version has it. A second rendering, to which commentators rather incline, in our day, is, "*Every scripture given by inspiration is also profitable for teaching, for correction,*" and so on. The one seems to assert that all Scriptures, or, as we should understand it, all the books which we comprise in the Holy Scriptures, are given by inspiration. That makes it an affirmation of the inspiration of what we know as the Bible. The other rendering, which is probably the correct one, makes it seem that all Scriptures

Dec. 10, 1871. Lesson: 2 TIM. II., 23-26; III. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos 130, 688, 74.

which are inspired of God are profitable in such and such ways. Then it becomes a kind of test, rather than an affirmation.

I desire, to-day, to make some plain, practical remarks on the subject of the Bible, which seem to be demanded by the times, and by the interest of thousands in the community; and I shall address myself especially to the young who are committed to my charge. I do not propose—since it could not be done even by a series of discourses—to go into the whole subject of the origin, the authenticity, the authority, the structure, the genius and the uses of the Scriptures which we comprise in the Bible. I shall give, to-day, rather an introductory discourse, hoping to resume, now and then, without any definite, specified time, the same general theme, to be continued for the purpose of throwing light on the Word of God.

Among all Christians not included in hierarchical church organization, the Bible is held to be a sufficient authority for faith and practice. But it is not meant that it contains *all* truth; or that every application of truth is pointed out; still less are we to hold the Bible as a complete system of truth in any such sense as shall exclude the idea of a continuous growth of the truth in the world, through the experience of holy men, in all successive ages, divinely taught and guided. It contains the *germs* of all moral truth. But human life quickens the germs and carries out those truths into forms and appreciation which the original did not portend.

This progressive development of truth, in human life, not perhaps enough recognized by the Reformers, was seized upon as a dogma by hierarchical churches. They claim for the organized church a living divine inspiration, by which the decisions of the church are infallibly true, on the same ground that Protestants hold the Bible to be true. While we deny that any particular organized church is God's tongue, in this word, we do recognize the fact, that, by the experience of good men, of every church, through long periods of time, God does bring out into full development, truths which in the Bible are but seeds or germs. We must not make the Bible a dead book nor separate it from that grand interpreting medium—the living conscience of holy men, through successive ages. A Book of garnered truth, gathered from universal moral consciousness of the past—and framed under a divine inspiration into an authoritative guide for conduct, must in every age, be surrounded by an atmosphere of living Christian consciousness. If the Bible is a book of seeds, the living church, composed of all good men of every house, is the soil into which it must fall if it is to bring forth fruit. We must not make an idol of the church, nor a fetich of the Bible. God alone is light and truth. Both Church and Bible are but

media through which he shines—and both of them, if wisely used, are adapted to lead on to a continually progressing development of truth.

Attacks were formerly made upon the Bible by skeptical men who were without moral feeling. The evils of the organized church, its alliance with the State, and the great establishments which grew up under it, and which usurped many of the privileges of the citizen and variously interfered with his rights, were attributed to the influence of the Bible. And so there was developed a revolt against the Scriptures, as well as against the church. Both modes of instructing the world were condemned. But the skepticism which then arose had only a local and limited influence. It sprang from interior causes. It did not go down so deep as skepticism has since learned to go. And it required but comparatively little to remove it. For many revivals of religion have been the instruments, in the hands of God, by which this unbelief has been blown away like so much chaff. The actual experiences in men's hearts have had the effect of overthrowing arguments of skepticism, and reinstating in their place arguments in favor of the truths of God's Word, and of the church as a witness of those truths.

But in our day there is a far more serious danger attending the Bible than there has been at any previous time. The assaults which are made upon it are more vital than they ever were before. They are stronger. They are better aimed. They are more in accordance with the general tendencies of human thought. They are in alliance with scientific inquiry. There are a great many reasons why men should concern themselves as to the future of the truths that are taught in the Word of God.

It is assailed on historic and critical grounds with an acuteness and a range of scholarship which I think never before were brought to the assault of any book. If I did not believe that the preponderance of evidence still remained with the Bible, I should not be sincere in holding to it; but I do believe this: I believe that the historic grounds on which the Book rests, in its various parts, can be substantiated. I believe that the critical grounds of assault against it can be met and overthrown by fair critical knowledge on the other side. Nevertheless, the campaign is a vast one; it is going to be another Waterloo; and although the armies of liberty will conquer in the end, it will be after a severe conflict. The scope of science in these days is widening and deepening and taking up many facts and theories for examination which it has heretofore let alone. It used to be said that the Word of God confined itself to the teaching of religion, that it did not undertake to

teach science; and that, therefore, while it was not to be held to accountability in scientific matters, it was an authority in matters of moral consciousness. But science has risen up and embraced in its arms these very matters of moral consciousness; so that the Word of God is assailed by those who make a scientific study of the prime elements on which it stands And this is a far more dangerous assault than it has ever before been called to bear. I am not afraid of it—not a particle; but I perceive it, and I feel the full weight of the danger.

This atmosphere of doubt acts in a great many ways. He is little conversant with what is going on in life; he knows little of the conversations and readings and thoughts of vigorous, enterprising men, who does not know that there hangs over the whole subject of religion, and particularly its dogmas, a great deal of doubt and uneasiness, which in some moods runs into a kind of positive unbelief, and which in other moods reacts, and goes back to the belief of childhood. There is a state of distressing uncertainty and aberration of faith which requires attention.

There are a great many who are simply unsettled. They say, "We are not prepared to give up the Book of our fathers; but really, we have read such and such things, and we do not know how to answer them. And we are told of other such and such things. Some things that used to be taught for truth we know are not true; and why may it not be so with all the others? Men who seem to us to be perfectly honest, noble men, have given up the Book, and have told us that they did it on the strictest grounds of scrutiny. And what shall we do? We are incompetent to judge of these things by our own reason, and we look to see how other men are tending; this unsettles us; and we do not know what to believe."

At this point there comes in the divisions of religious people. There is a large body of men outside of the church who say that the Word of God is not worthy of credence as a revelation, or an inspired document. And their testimony against the Bible is strangely indorsed by the fact that in the church itself thousands of disputes are occurring on almost every point laid down in the Word of God, from beginning to end.

To me the most dismal aspect of the divisions and conflicts in the church, is at that point where the great controversy is raging, as to whether there is a God anyhow; where the questions are being asked, "Is there a possibility of revelation? Is historic revelation anything more than the weavings of imagination?" At that time when the wind of controversy sweeps mightily through the whole heavens, men that believe in the Bible, instead of fortifying them-

selves against the common enemy, are disputing, I will not say about doctrines (because that would have some nobility in it), but about the poorest and meanest elements which belong to exterior worship and procedure. These are subjects of fierce debate; and men are being cast out, or taken in on the letter; and the pharisaism of learning is rampant in the Temple, while a cloud is gathering in Jerusalem which threatens to subvert the Temple and the city itself.

The conflicts which are going on as to forms, and ceremonies, and methods, and liturgies, and the doctrinal conflicts in the Christian church, at such a time as this, cannot but surprise one. It is as if a ship were surrounded by piratical craft, and in danger of being captured and destroyed, while those on board, instead of making resistance, or endeavoring to escape, quarrel with each other as to the quality of the buttons on their jackets, or the number of teeth in their combs, or the material and cut of their garments, or how powder is made, or whether one brand of powder is better than another.

Now, a state of doubt in respect to the Word of God is, in its practical consequences, just as fatal as unbelief.

When a man would come into the port of New York, it is not necessary, in order to defeat his purpose, that the ice should be frozen across the bar, or that there should be a chain drawn across the channel, or that forts should blaze away and sink him. Only let the white mist fall down from the cool heaven, and stretch from shore to shore, that is all that is necessary to prevent his progress.

Only let unbelief settle upon the mind; let there come down into it, I will not say conviction *against*, but uncertainty *about*, the truths of God's Word,—and to all intents and purposes you have paralyzed faith. And without faith there is no religion.

A man, we will suppose, is steering by his compass; but the thought flashes across his mind, "The compass may be out of order —who knows?" And the moment that idea enters his head all his comfort is gone. He is steering by that tremulous finger; but, after all, that tremulous finger may be betraying him. If he has but one compass he has great trouble; and if he has two he is worse off, because he does not know which of them to follow.

I believe in my watch. I have tried it and proved it. For two years it has never once failed me. I *know* it is right. And whatever railroad men or others may say about the time, I take this little watch for my guide, and have implicit faith in it. But if to-morrow morning I should find that it had jumped an hour, it would unsettle the faith which two years of correct time-keeping have given me. I might say, "It kept correct time for two years; but then it

jumped in one night a whole hour; and how do I know but it will do that again?" Uncertainty would substantially take away all the value of it.

Now, the Word of God, to be of value to you, or to me, must be as implicitly believed in as our own existence; and if there come from any quarter such a degree of disturbance of faith that we are uncertain about the substantial element of its truth, to us it is blotted out as a power. Now and then it may feed a sentiment; now and then it may solace a memory; now and then it may, like a poem, chant strains which bring old and sweet associations back to the mind; but as the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation, it has ceased to have any important efficacy.

There are thousands of men (and some of them are in this congregation) who would not say that they disbelieve the Bible, but who could not say that they believe it. They are in a state of uncertainty in which the moral power of the book is broken.

This growing uneasiness works out along very different lines, in different dispositions, and under different circumstances. One class of men say, "Of what use is a book which learned men are in utter uncertainty about? What is the use of a book to guide us when scarcely two of those who take it as a guide agree as to its guidance? What is the use of a chart when all shipmasters interpret it differently? What is the use of a guide-board which misleads one half of those who employ it? And if the Word of God is a light shining in a dark place, and a lamp to our feet, and a guide to our path, and the man of our counsel, ought it not to be so reliable that all honest men at least shall substantially agree with it?" To this I answer Yes! And not only should it be so, but it *is* so, in the one very essential particular for which it was designed. The part of Scripture about which there is certainty, is that which is pointed out in our text:

"All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

I hold that the Word of God as a guide in the formation of dispositions, in the regulation of conduct and character, in the founding of hope for this life and for the life which is to come, is a reliable guide, is a sufficient instructor, about which all honest men do in the main agree. But if you undertake to erect a cosmogony, and to say that the Bible lays down a perfect system, a complete scheme of philosophy; if you go beyond that, and claim that it prescribes a definite plan for a church, a church order and a church government; and if you include in its economy moral philosophy in the form of theology, I say that the Word of God is not sufficient

for these things; and men disagree about the Bible because they are undertaking to do with it what it was never intended to effect.

Everything to its own function. A lancet for the vein—not for digging the soil; a telescope for the eye—not for sound; a cap for the head—not for hands or feet. A table of logarithms in the sphere of morals would be a poor substitute for the Ten Commandments, but not worse than the Ten Commandments in Navigation. Is an anchor not good because it will not travel like a carriage? Is a treatise or medicine not useful because it affords no instruction in geography or history?

God's Word sets forth the nature of good and evil; of virtue and vice; of sin and holiness; of goodness or ungodliness; it points out the elements of character needful for the highest manhood. It teaches the divine nature, in so far as men can receive it by similitudes of human experience. It furnishes motives for right living drawn from two worlds. It reveals the methods of recuperation in moral disorders. It opens to us the spiritual relations which may subsist between the human soul and the divine spirit. It makes known the holiness of God, whose nature is the criterion of all characters, and of all right government. In short, the Bible is a book of instructions, in respect to human life and destiny. It concerns itself with Character and Conduct. No man need err who honestly uses the Bible for the purpose of forming his disposition or guiding his moral life. If he wishes to know the noblest qualities of soul, there are the Beatitudes. If he desire the loftiest ideal of every day life, there is the Sermon on the Mount. If he would know the Divine disposition, there is Jesus Christ. If he would overcome the fear of death, he may hear the Apostle at the grave's mouth lifting up a sublime psalm of victory for himself, and for all who have learned the royal law of love. If there were in the Bible not another sentence than this: *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*, it would deserve to be placed above every book, for having given to the world the central and grandest truth of human life. The sovereignty of Love, in God and in man, as the supreme philosophy of the Universe, now and hereafter, is a discovery in moral government transcending in importance the discoveries of Newton as much as the living soul transcends in importance the inorganic matter of the globe!

The Bible comes to us, not like a treatise consecutively composed by one man, or a symmetrical system of philosophy drawn out according to the requirements of modern thought. It is a cluster of separate growths, going on through ages, and yet, like some vast old oak, or Cedar of Lebanon, all its additions, to the last and

outermost twig, cohere around the one trunk, stand on the one root, and partake of the peculiar nature of the original. Its earliest scenes are the simplest histories of pastoral life; its latest are the inciters of renowned civilization. But whether it speak in the picture language of the early Hebrew, or in the language of Plato, its testimony to truth, virtue, goodness, and godliness, is grandly *one*. If the book itself has no literary structure of symmetry, it harmonizes the moral sense of the Ages, gives to the widely separated periods of History one mind, one heart, and one interpretation of the universal aspiration.

Used as a book of Political Economy, it will yield much wisdom, though still not set forth as a teacher of Political Economy, except in the element of morals. Used as a book of physical science, it affords important historical help; but it is not a scientific manual. Incidentally it is full of history, of poetry, of jurisprudence, of homely wisdom in trade. But its true value is seen only when it begins to teach *how* "*the man of God may be thoroughly furnished to every good work.*"

Another class who are tending toward doubt and unbelief, set themselves to the study of "the evidences." Sometimes they come out one way, and sometimes another. Men seem to think that the study of the evidences is a very simple matter; but when you take into consideration that the Bible is a complex series of books, written in different ages and nations and languages, and running through a space of several thousand years; that in their structure they represent the sum of the knowledges of certain nations—there being, for instance, books in which is included all that the Jews knew of science, of political economy, of poetry, and of religion,—you perceive that the field which they cover is too vast for a single mind to explore. And when you come to study these books in their antiquities, in the manners and customs of the people to which they relate, and in the languages in which they are written, you enter upon a work which belongs only to men of scholarly equipment. And one cannot help smiling to see a plain man undertaking to study out the evidences of the Bible with a Greek Testament in his hand, and endeavoring to determine the meaning of the Greek, knowing nothing about the language whatsoever except that which he sees in the interlineations. The investigation of the structure of the Bible, and of the material which relates to its physical birth, and growth, and life, is a scholar's work. It is so large, and it requires such minute and various learning, that in any single age even scholars are not competent to exhaust the subject. It is a succession of scholars from age to age that at last bring

the truth to the judgment-seat, and determine matters. And when a plain unlettered man undertakes to study the evidences of the Bible—that is, all questions that relate to the book of Genesis; all questions that relate to the origin of things; all questions that relate to the existence of God; all questions that spring from the miracles of the Old Testament; all questions that relate to Solomon and to David, and the administrations under them; to the Temple-system; to the birth and career of the Saviour, and to the lives of the apostles, —not being in the habit of study, and not being versed in such matters, it is as if a man, listening to an old sailor's account of what he had seen in his travels around the globe, should say, "Well, I am going to dive into the ocean, and swim all over the world, and see these things for myself." But he will swim the ocean, and go into every bay and inlet, and up every river and creek, and down to the bottom, and everywhere, twice as quick as an untrained, common, plain man will investigate all the questions which belong to that wonderful encyclopœdia, the book of God, in its interior history, and in all the elements which pertain to that history. Such an investigation requires great learning, if carried forward to a common ground of certainty.

Now, I believe that the investigations instituted by scholars have come to results more and more in accordance with the truth, with the authority of the Scripture, and with the real spiritual value of the Word of God; but I know that I could not investigate the Bible for myself, *de novo*, although my whole life were spent in the work. There is nothing that I feel so incompetent to do as to adjudicate on these external questions. And I do not believe that one young man in a thousand is competent to inquire into them and decide them.

But I am competent to know whether the truth is better than a lie; and so are you. I am competent to know what elements go to make true manhood; and so are you. I am competent to know whether it is best that men should have immortality hereafter, or die like beasts; and so are you. I am competent to know that love is better than hatred; and so are you. Inspirations may be given to you and to me to understand the Bible, just as they were originally given to men who wrote the Bible. Spiritual purity and divine love are the elements which go to constitute the great doctrine of God, whether they be constructed into a theory or not. We have a knowledge of certain great truths which are beyond peradventure. There is given to all a moral instinct which you cannot throw out; or which, if you do throw out, will come back like a dove to its window. There is in every man a moral consciousness that inter-

prets truth, that opens up communion between God and man, that lights the candle of the future, and that inspires hope therein. There is in you and in me an almost unerring guide—a truly unerring guide, if we be honest with ourselves—in respect to the vital portions of Scripture. The external history of the Bible is beyond our reach, except so far as we, as docile scholars, receive it as others bear witness concerning it; but the internal part of the Bible we can know; and it is our fault if we do not know it.

Right over against those who doubt and those who study evidences, we find a class of persons—excellent men—who are supposed to be safe persons, and who, doubtless, are safe for themselves, and for those who are like them, but who are for others unsafe guides. I mean the devotee, who, seeing the mischiefs of doubt in the community, undertakes to cure them by refusing to doubt anything; who believes with an indiscriminate all-believing disposition; who denies himself thought, and denies it to others; who says, "If you begin there is no end." Who says, "If you once undertake to apply philosophy to Scripture, you never can tell where you will come out;" who says, "You must take the Word of God just as it is." Where? in the Greek? Oh, you cannot read Greek. Well, as it is in translation? So, then, you do not take it as it is in the original; you take as it has been translated. And when it was translated was there not an application of philosophy? Did a man ever translate an idea without using philosophy? Men say, "You must take the Bible just as it is; you must read it literally." That is absurd. Christ says:

"If any man believe in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of water."

Shall I take that literally? Well, no; that is a figure. Very good, how shall I determine which is figure and which is not? You must reason about the Bible. You cannot help yourself. It is full of poetry; and have I a right to take the declarations of poetry and use them as I would exact definitions? I falsify the record if I do. There was never a book that justified and required so much reasoning, in the right way, as the Bible—the reasoning of common sense.

"But," say men, "everything is uncertain about the Bible." O, no, there are some things that are certain about it. Yet it is not wise to undertake to apply modern science to it, or to undertake to go into this cosmogony or that cosmogony. Some men drive all things into their faith as all beasts were driven into the ark. They are in a vast ark, and out on a vast sea, without any pilotage, and with no Ararat on which to land.

Now, although this may be safe, it is safe only in respect to men who are not in danger anyhow from unbelief, or from over-reason-

ing, or from under-reasoning, or from wrong reasoning. There are men who have a just pride of knowledge, and who do not want to be led by the nose either by priest or by government. There are some men who have been brought up to feel that they have a responsibility laid on them for some sort of knowledge or education, and they say, "I am not going to be swayed hither and thither, like a dead leaf on a living river." So they carry the Bible like a closed book.

If there is one thing more true than another, it is that the Bible was never meant to go against nature. If God made the Bible, he made it in such a sense true that the marrow of it is coincident with the truths of the creation. If Scripture is from God, so the outward world is from the hand of God. And God will not tell lies. He will not contradict in one revelation what he has written in another. And if the Word of God is so construed that it is brought into conflict with the truths that are outside of it, something must give way — human interpretations or divine facts—and facts will not.

Intepreters once tried this authoritative process on the sun. The sun had all the time been supposed to move, and the world had been supposed to stand still. A literal interpretation was given to the Scripture account of the sun's standing still. The world, it was supposed, was built on an immovable foundation. It was supposed from the statement in the Bible that the sun rose, and that when it was about to set it was stopped in its course by Joshua. Astronomy, it was supposed, was fixed by the Bible. And when, by and by, there came a man who had read God's other revelation, and found out that while the sun moved it did not move in any such sense as men supposed it did, and declared it to the world, all the church rose up against him and tried him and condemned him, and made him step up to the altar, and say, "I recant; I take it back." But just as quick as they turned to go away he said, "It *does* more, though." There were one or two star-gazers who believed as he did; and there was nothing on their side except a fact. But what a fact it was! The sun in the heavens where God put it, moved in its remote sphere inconspicuously, and the earth, one of the planets, was sweeping around it. This was a demonstrable fact; and against it, apparently, were the letter, hereditary opinions, and the interpreting authority of the church. At a time when the church comprised the world, the whole church arrayed itself, with the letter on its side, against this simple astronomical fact. And the fact killed the theologians. Then the whole world said, "Oh, well, the Bible does not undertake to teach matters about astronomy. We

are to interpret the letter according to the fact which is outside of it.

Then came, not a great while ago—within my memory—the investigations of geology. Men said, "God has written on the face of the earth in a handwriting that can be understood; it is seen on the rocks; he has put his dates there; and this world is older than six thousand years. Certainly the creation of this world could not be compressed within the short space of time that it is said to have been." Men say, "How do you know anything about the time required for the creation of the globe? How can geology teach anything about it?" By the significant sign of cause and effect. To deny the evidence of cause and effect in geology is to deny the only principle on which you can demonstrate the existence of a God.

If a man find a watch, he is perfectly certain that it could not make itself He knows that it must have had a maker. And so, when we see certain effects in the world, we say, "These effects must have had a cause. A part of these effects are sentient creatures; and they never could have originated themselves." Men recognized the general fact that where there was an effect it must have had a cause, and that the cause corresponded to the effect. From these premises they reasoned that there was an almighty God. Not because they saw the world created; but by reasoning along the line of cause and effect they deduced the existence of a God. It was from precisely this argument that the age of the world was deduced. And if the argument of cause and effect is valid in one's belief in regard to the existence of God, it is just as valid in regard to the creation of the world. Men cried, "Genesis says that, six days God labored, and rested on the seventh day;" and the whole church thundered at the infidelity of geology, and men were denounced as unbelievers who accepted its testimony. And yet, there was that old rock-record; there it contentedly and quietly stood; and men from generation to generation went to look at it, and read it. And what has been the result? The rocks are not changed, and their testimony is not changed, but the construction of Genesis is changed. Almost every interpreter of the Bible of the present day says, "A day is an indefinite period." And the account in Genesis is now held up as one of the most remarkable of statements because it declares the order of creation as science itself deduces it. And when it speaks of the time occupied in the world's creation it is universally construed to mean, not limited spaces of time, but gigantic periods. And so science and geology are reconciled with the declarations of Genesis.

It is said to young men, "You ought not to read in matters of science; it is very dangerous." I do not know what is not dangerous. There is only one thing that I can think of that is not dangerous, and that is dying. Being born is dangerous enough. And it is dangerous to live. It is more and more dangerous to live as you grow and develope. It is dangerous to read, and it is dangerous not to read. It is dangerous to use your eyes, and it is dangerous not to use them. It is dangerous not to believe enough, and it is dangerous to believe too much. Men are but stumbling machines, Things never go in right lines and symmetries. Men grope, and the world gropes, in matters that touch the deep foundations of happiness. And among the mysteries of time is the fact that men are left with all the responsibilities and all the risks of exploration, with its mistakes, its over-actions, and its under-actions.

I do not say to young men, "Do not acquaint yourselves with natural science;" but I do say to them, "Do not make haste." I do not say to them, "Do not read;" but I do say to them, "*Study.*" I do not say to them, "Do not deduce conclusions;" but I do say to them, "Do not make haste to deduce conclusions. Be patient. Wait." I do not say to them, "Do not fearlessly let the light of science shine on the Word of God;" but I do say to them, "Do not abandon that Book as a guide to your feet in those vital elements of which it teaches, do not abandon it in its marrow, for the sake of scientific deductions."

Why, in order to have wheat you must have bran and chaff and straw. Men cannot in this world raise up a truth and not have a human and a perishing vehicle through which it shall develop itself. There is much in the mere external structure, in the outward mechanism or history, of any treatise of truth, that may be subject to doubt, or modification, or change; but the question is whether there are not internal elements which are transcendently more important than any of these external ones. The question is whether these internal elements do not remain when the others have perished. They do. The spiritual force of the Bible gains more and more in every generation. Its internal elements are inexpugnable. Not all that is said about them, not all the doctrines that are woven out of them, will stand; but I believe in my soul that when science has driven in its shafts, and exploded all that is separable from the theories which are deduced from the Scripture, and when the world has been brought by better knowledge closer to moral consciousness, it will be found that the Word of God will stand higher, as well as safer than it does to-day.

It was never wise, it seems to me, for men to refuse to open their

eyes to the truth, or to hear what might be said in reference to the Word of God. And it is fatally unwise in our day to refuse thought to men, or to dissuade them from it, because there is opening up an immense field of investigation outside of the Bible, bearing on topics respecting the origin of man, his physical life, his adaptation to civil government, and his liberty or circumscription. The questions of right and wrong; the questions of moral responsibility; the questions which relate to the formation of character; the questions which relate to moral consciousness and moral intuition; the questionswhich relate to the all-informing spirit and presence and power of the divine—these are questions that long have waited for light and knowledge. When they have been solved by patient investigation, they will every one of them come back like so many singing-birds to settle on the branches of this tree of life. And we shall be all the better for it.

I do not believe that anything will ever permanently destroy the hold of the Bible upon men's love and trust. It may be done, however, by claiming for it, what it does not claim for itself, and what cannot be substantiated—that it is the sum of all secular knowledge.

When we rise to the other life, we shall find that this world, the whole of it, is but a mere punctuation point in that system which God is conducting, and that the truths which are believed here are, exactly as Paul said they were, partial. Said that intense believer and intense skeptic,

"Now I know in part." "Now we see through a glass, darkly" [dimly].

He that had had ambitions; he that had stood in the topmost places of learning, did not pretend that he knew everything. Though he had been caught up into the seventh heaven, and had seen things which it was impossible to utter, he did not pretend that he knew all things. But he knew enough to love Christ, and to believe that Christ would give him immortality, and to never fail in his fealty and affection. And he said, substantially, "All that I know in this world, compared with what I shall know when I see God, is as what I knew when I was a child compared with what I know now."

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth——"

He knew that there would be a modification in the progress of knowledge; he knew that many things would be changed; but there were three things that he knew would stay. What were they? Doctrines of science? Principles of political economy? Intellectual convictions?

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three."

They were realities; they were absolute; they were for all time, forever. But they were not equal. One was to be lifted up above the others.

"The greatest of these is love."

Faith and hope were to be the auxiliaries and helpers of love. This he knew.

Now, I protest against such a use of the Word of God as many men are constantly tempted to make of it, putting it in the way of scientific inquiry; calling their interpretation of the Bible, the Bible; and stopping men's investigations by saying, "The Scripture says so and so;" and crying out *infidel* to those who push their inquiries beyond the ordinary bounds, and attempt to unfold certain occult mysteries of life. To-day science is exploring in every direction; and in every direction men are found with their little Bibles in their hands, saying to science, "You must not! You will destroy this book!" If I had no more faith in this book than they have, I would not believe in it all. Do you suppose men are going to destroy that book? If it is what we have held it to be, God's truth, then it ought to stand, and it will stand; but if it is not God's absolute truth, then give me that truth. The value of the Bible to me is in this, that I believe it to be God's testimony of things which it is transcendently important for me to know. If it is not so, then I am more concerned in having it disproved than anything else. And I invoke science, poetry and philosophy, and say to them, "My belief in the Bible is founded on actual experience. I have tasted the fruit that is growing on that tree; I have fed on it; and I know what it is. I know what the affections are. I have tried them. I know what living one way is, and what living another way is. I know what aspiration is on the one side, and what small attainment is on the other side. I know what faith and hope are; and I know what unbelief is. I know what benevolence is; and I know what selfishness and avarice are. I know the carnal man; and I know the spiritual man. I know the modes by which the one is controlled, and the other is directed; and I find these modes to accord exactly with this Direction Book. And whatever moral or casuistical questions may arise, I am not going to give up that Book as a practical guide until you put in my hands a clearer and better guide.

Such is my faith in the Bible; and I say to every young man, "If you read from mere curiosity, or simply to construct a system, you do not know anything about the Bible. Nobody knows anything about it until it is to him what a chart is on a voyage, or what a medicine-box is in actual sickness."

When a doctor is called to the bedside of his own sick child, he looks at his medical book with a very different spirit from that with which he studied it when he sat in the academy of science, and listened to lectures, and heard about the relations of certain parts of the human body, and the effects of such and such medical agents, and the significance of such and such symptoms. These were all abstract matters then; but now that sickness has come into his own house, a practical question presents itself to him—namely, "How shall I meet this tide of fever? What shall I do?" He is in the wilderness, and there is no counselor nor friend near. He has nothing to consult but his book. And how differently he goes to that book from what he did when he was simply studying medicine. It is his child; and if there is any succor he must find it. Now he reads for a purpose; and how sharply he reads, lest he may commit a mistake! And when he has cured her, with what confidence he goes to his neighbor's children when they are sick of the same disease! And after he has succeeded in curing them also by following the same directions, he says, "Talk against that book of medicine? I tell you it has carried me through many difficult places."

It is the medicating power of the Bible that gives it its value. I do not ignore its beautiful historical statements; these things are admirable; but it is in the wisdom and power of God to the salvation of a man's innermost self, that its worth consists. It is its secret power on conscience, and faith, and hope. Men *know* about the Bible; they have *felt* it; and that is clear evidence, and evidence that cannot be taken away from them.

What scenes this old Bible has been through! It has been fulled, and fulled, and fulled, as no woolen cloth was ever fulled. It has been smelted as no steel was ever smelted. It has been cast, sometimes into shot, and sometimes into shell, and sometimes into pikes on *chevaux-de-frise*. It has been brought into requisition on many a battle-field. It has been used as artillery and against artillery. Councils have been divided about that Book. It has been sacked and ransacked. And yet it stands. And it is a universal blessing. It is the poor man's Book. It is the slave's Book. It is the sorrowing widow's Book. When anybody is in distress, there is something in that Book which he wants more than anything else in the world. It is because that Book touches all the fundamental experiences of men, dropping below all conventional thoughts and feelings, and blessing them in the very soul, that they cling to it; and as long as there is a man introuble, and the Bible touches him as nothing else can; as long as the crying race of mankind need sympathy and succor, and it comes to them

from this source—so long, say what you please, that Book will stand. But it will stand, not by reason of its texts, or its miracles, but by reason of its inward life. I do not dishonor its external elements, or its machinery, (I shall have more to say about these hereafter); but its authority and inspiration stand in this, that it is a Book designed to touch the heart, the conscience, the whole moral nature, leading a man up into nobler manhood, and out of this life into a blessed immortality. There I say this Book is inexpugnable.

I meet men who do not believe John wrote John's Gospel. Well, what matters it whether he did or not? There is a forest in England, it is said, which William the Conqueror planted; but what do I care whether he planted it or not? If I can ride through it, why should I care who planted it? There are the trees and there is the shade; and if I can only enjoy the benefits of them that is enough.

Some men say that the Psalms of David are not inspired. I will not now dispute whether they are inspired or not; but I know that no other such hymnals ever went sounding on through three thousand years of the world's history, developing power and sweetness as they went. They sang, and taught the world to sing. If they are not inspired, they have an admirably good substitute for inspiration.

Men tell me that they do not believe Christ was anything more than a man, highly organized and super-excited. However that may be, there was before his advent, and there has been since, no such man as He who said that he was the Brother of man and the Son of God. He declared that he came into the world to reveal to us that the purest and the best was he that had the most compassion upon the impure and the worst; he taught mankind that God did not sit on his throne like Thor, smiting with gigantic hammer on the anvil of affairs, but that the heart of God was the medicine of the world, and that yet, in the circling ages, God's great love wherewith he loved the race, should redeem them, and that there should be a new heaven and a new earth in which should dwell righteousness.

Why should one desire to put away, or lower the estimate of a Book, in which lie hidden, as in a range of mountains, veins of gold, precious stones—and upon which grew all trees in beauty, and for fruit, and along whose sides the free winds forever bring health and joy?

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice to believe, our Father, that around about thee, in heaven, are only the rejoicing. Upon them has fallen the light of thy face. They have seen thee as thou art. They are transformed into thine image. In heaven is perfect joy, growing with growing capacity. And yet, though thou rejoicest in thine own, and art at home with them there, thou art not absorbed to the forgetting of those who are afar off. Wherefore hast thou dispersed the works of thine hand to the uttermost to forget them? Thou art nourishing the universe; and the things which are remotest and furthest from their end, and which through ages are growing toward it, are still watched of thee.

What is the sovereign plan which thou art pursuing, none may know. We cannot, by our thoughts, solve what thou art in thy greatness. Nor, when we follow thy works are we able to comprehend all thy meanings. But we believe that thou art, by thy will, overruling, governing, bringing to pass events, and that all are tending, according to some sovereign law of thine, to their final good; and that of all things—even those that are furthest from thee, and most unlike thee, as well as the least—are under thy direction. Thou hast taught us that the sparrow shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. The most insignificant things are still remembered. Yea, in their perishing there is a use, and a reason. No wanton fate disports over all the earth. God rules. Thou art in heaven Father; and thou art throughout the universe Father, to those who can know thy Fatherhood. Thou art Governor and Guide; and thou art fashioning all things according to the purpose of thy will. And we rejoice, when we are able to read, and when the lore of the universe is stretched out as a scroll before us. And when we shall be able to read in lines of living light all thy thought, and all thy designs, and the history of all things that are, then shall we rejoice more than we can now—yea, we shall rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable to any human tongue. And then, thou wilt be God over all to us, blessed forever.

We rejoice now in the faith of these things. We believe that the sun shall rise, when we see the twilight of the morning melting into growing light. Though we do not see the sun, we believe in the glory of the future. Though we may not on earth behold its realization, we believe that thou art ruling in the heaven, and governing on the earth, and carrying out thy great purpose of recuperating mercy. We believe that yet all the earth shall see thy salvation, and rejoice in thee. Thou hast permitted us to labor in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thou hast permitted us to serve thy cause, upheld by the power of the Holy Ghost, renewing our strength from day to day. Thou hast taught us what is high and what is low, and given us a desire for more and more perfect attainments. Thou hast granted unto us more experience of love from year to year, and a stronger wish that others should be participants of it. And we beseech of thee, O Lord, that thou wilt accept our thanks that we have had this knowledge of thee revealed, not by the letter, but by the Spirit.

Thou hast commanded us to make known to all those who are around about us, that which we have learned of thy divine nature. We are to be witnesses not only in a well-ordered life, but also in speech, to our fellow-men, of the mercy and goodness of God, and of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thou hast called us workers together with thee—fellow-laborers. Thou art inspiring, and we are working. And we are prepared to spread abroad the knowledge of thy word. Everywhere thou hast taught thy people, not to live alone for the things which they see, and not to be

benevolent alone in respect to the things which are before them. Thou hast taught them to lay the foundations of this land in truth and justice. Thou hast taught them to build institutions whose blessings shall go on doing their work in after times. Thou hast given them foresight to judge and plan, not only for the things which pertain to the social economy of life, but also to the things which relate to the spiritual welfare of this nation. Yea, thou hast said, *The field is the world.* Thou hast taught us that all men are our brethren. Thou hast opened our hearts. And we desire that men may be gathered in to know Christ, whom to know aright is life eternal.

We thank thee that in days gone by thou hast inspired humble men, and men mighty of faith, and sent them forth in their wisdom, and enabled them to bear persecution when it was heaped upon them, and given them strength to withstand opposition when it came in their way. We thank thee that thou hast caused the truth to be mighty, that thou hast overruled the powers of this world, that thou hast given a knowledge of Christ to every land by the hand of thy faithful servants, that thou art gathering churches every where, and that thy truth is being made known even in the howling wilderness.

We thank thee for all thy promises which respect the future. They stand like stars in the horizon; and brightly they shine through the night of our fear and doubt. Lord, when wilt thou come and bring to pass, in the fullness of their glory, all the delayed promises of thy Word? When wilt thou gather in Jew and Gentile? When shall all the earth see thy salvation?

We pray for all the great, outspread race of man. We pray that the nations which are strong may use their strength for the civilization of those that are weak, and not for their destruction. We pray that thou wilt restrain the greediness of national ambition and avarice, and that thou wilt increase the desire of nations for fellowship and brotherhood. Bless all the tendencies toward a better feeling among nations. Accept our thanks for all the events of our time which portend a closer unity, and kinder relations between nations. Bind together the strong nations for the sake of the weak. And we pray that all the power of our civilization may be put under those that are in barbarism, to lift them up. May commerce, in all its dealings with mankind, seek to enlighten them, and raise them higher in the scale of being. We pray that religion itself may go forth commissioned by thee to break fetters and to open prison doors. We beseech of thee that revolutions, as God's mighty ploughings, may break through the crust, and turn up the soil to the air and sun, that all those good things which men desire and seek may be realized. May they be as John Baptists, stern and acerb, before the sweet and gentle invitations of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray that the time may come when we shall more and more see that the nations of the earth are coming together, and that all peoples and tongues under the heaven are speaking one language of sympathy, and love, and benevolence.

And we pray that thy kingdom may come everywhere. Let those, to-day, who are preaching the Gospel in the uttermost parts of the earth feel thy blessing descend upon them. And as thou dost gather up the moisture from the ocean, to be swept by mighty winds upon continents afar off, and to bring forth flowers and harvests, so may the prayers that go up from the lips of thy servants descend in blessings upon distant places. Remember the congregations that worship in the wilderness to-day. Remember those travelers in the wilderness who withhold their progress to-day, and gather around about them their wives and children, and renew their consecration to thee. Be with those, who, to-day, upon the sea, endeavor to worship God, whether they be in the midst of storm or calm. Draw near to all that

are afar off, and that remember the sanctuary, and that pine for it. Be near to those who are sick, or are tried in heart. Be near to all that are in trouble and walk in darkness. Be near to the needy. O God of love and compassion, look down to-day upon the destitute households of thine own dear ones. Grant thy blessing to rest upon those who know thee, and upon those who know thee not; upon those who obey thee and serve thee, and upon those who are disobedient and wandering. Gather in Jew and Gentile, and fill the whole earth with thy glory. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the word of truth which has been spoken. We pray that we may be kept from every extreme; that we may be kept under the influence of thy good Spirit; that we may be kept in the way of all truth; that we may not be impatient and arrogant, and think that we know all things. We know but little. And may we be humble before both God and men in view of that great void of knowledge which our ignorance makes. Grant, we pray thee, that we may take thy word, not from curiosity, and not for the conflict of jarring sects or parties, but secretly, silently, into our hungry souls as food. May we take it as the medicine of God for our ailments. May it be as the staff of life to us, that we may lean on it. May it be a lamp lit in troublous and dangerous ways, so that we may guide our steps by it. May we undertake to live by thy word. And so may we read it, to know what is God's thought of man's nature and character, and what is God's heart and will and wish concerning us; and so may we draw nearer to our interior self, growing more honest and reverent, and coming nearer and nearer to thee, whom by searching we cannot find out. Thus may we live under the shadow of thy word until we are lifted up to that better knowledge of its tree of life, which grows by the river of life, in the heavenly land. And to thy name, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*

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